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PROFESSOR CLAY'S "AMURRU"

Amurru: The home of the Northern Semites. A study showing that the Religion and Culture of Israel are not of Babylonian origin. By ALBERT T. CLAY, Ph. D., Professor of Semitic Philology and Archæology, University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia: THE SUNDAY SCHOOL TIMES Co., 1909. 217 pages.

It requires great courage to challenge established ideas. For more than ten years it has become a dogma with a great many scholars—or to adopt the term that Prof. Clay and others apply to them, the Pan-Babylonians—that Babylonia had extensively influenced the culture and religion of Israel, and that the very foundations upon which the Jewish and Christian religion rests are borrowed from the Babylonian mythology. The foremost champion of these current opinions is Prof. Hugo Winckler of Berlin.

In opposing these views, the author's main contentions are that not only are these opinions void and baseless, but that a great many features of the Sumero-Babylonian culture and religion hitherto considered as having been developed in the Tigris-Euphrates valley had their origin and proper home in the Westland,—Amurru—the home of Israel.

The book consists of two parts and an appendix. In the first part the author outlines in introductory remarks the point of view of the Pan-Babylonians and controverts the foundations upon which their theories are based. Then he deals with the early stories in Genesis, of the Creation, Sabbath, antediluvian Patriarchs and the Deluge, the principal material for the support of the theory that Israel's literature is dependent upon that of Babylonia. These stories, including the Babylonian versions, are, in his opinion, west-Semitic. He proceeds to prove that the

original home of Semitic culture is the Westland, whence the Semites emigrated to Babylonia.

In the second part the author contends that most of the deities of the Semitic Babylonians, which have been recognized as sun-gods, had their origin in the great solar deity of the Western Semites, known as Amar or Mar and Ur, which was written in the script of the West אַמַר or מַר, and אֹור or וֹר, also known as שֶׁמֶשׁ. He demonstrates that these divine names are actually found in proper names of the Old Testament, as well as in those of West Semitic inscriptions.

In the appendix the author locates the city Ur of the Chaldees, explains the names of Jerusalem and Sargon King of Accad, and discusses the reading of NIN-IB and of Yahweh.

Within the narrow compass of a review it is hardly possible to give even the shortest outlines of the contents of this volume. All the suggestions of the author, though some of them are for the present only of hypothetical value, are of importance for the history of Israel.

This book will not appeal to Winckler and his followers. They are firm in their belief, and no proofs and arguments will disturb their minds. They will still adhere to their cherished ideas. If one does not agree with them, he is looked upon as reactionary and consequently of no account, and they do not trouble themselves to argue with men of this kind. But there are still a great many scholars without prejudice, and they will attach the right value to it. Its main points are as follows:

The religion of Israel is not to be regarded as being composed of transformed Babylonian and Assyrian myths. The anthropomorphic character of the gods enables us to find parallels for practically everything that took place in the lives of all Biblical characters. The foundations of Israel's history are not based upon an astral conception of the universe, since it has recently been proved that the science of astronomy was developed in Babylonia between the fourth and second century B. C. and did not take its rise in the early period of Babylonian history. There is no proof of such an astral conception in the Old Testament. It would be quite inconsistent with the legislation of Israel. No

iota of evidence has been produced to discredit the accounts of the Old Testament concerning the origin of the Hebrews.

The lack of archæological remains in Palestine is due to the fact that Israel used perishable material for ordinary writing purposes. Besides, it apparently did not develop the plastic art. The excavations do not show any Babylonian influence in the Israelitish or pre-Israelitish time. The monuments of Egypt furnish ample proof that the civilization of Syria-Palestine is Semitic and is as old as that of Egypt, if not older. The elements of culture that migrated from Babylonia to Egypt must have been first adopted by the inhabitants of Syria and transmitted by them. The discovery of two Babylonian epics in Tell-el-Amarna furnishes no evidence for the influence of Babylonia upon Canaan. They were text-books for learning the language, as they were interpunctuated, the words being separated by marks made with ink. Canaan was not at the time of the Exodus a domain of Babylonian culture; for, if it were, we should expect the chief deity of the Babylonians, Marduk, who a millennium prior to the Exodus had been the head of the Babylonian pantheon, to figure prominently in the West.

No proof is forthcoming that the Babylonian system of laws had been enforced upon the people of Canaan. The parallel laws in the Mosaic Code and in the Code of Hammurabi can be explained as coincidences which have arisen from similar conditions. Even a common origin for both cannot be proved.

The Sumerians no doubt greatly influenced the Semitic culture which was brought into the country; the Semites, on the other hand, had a great influence upon the Sumerians.

In the Babylonian Creation-legend upon which the Biblical Creation story is said to be dependent, there are two cosmologies amalgamated. One represents a Semitic myth coming from the West, in which Marduk, the God of light, is arrayed against Tiamat, the God of darkness; the other is a Sumerian myth, presumably from Eridu, resulting in the establishment of order by Ea, as against the chaos which is personified by Apsu. This amalgamation took place some time prior to the establishment of Ashurbanipal's library where this legend was found.

Sabbath is not of Babylonian origin. The Babylonian word *shabbatum* is a synonym of *gamaru* "to be complete, to be full" and was the name of the fifteenth day of the month and it doubtless had reference, as has been suggested, to the full moon in the middle of the month. The days of the calendar of festivals for the intercalary months, second Elul and Marheshvan, in which the duties of the King are prescribed for the seventh, fourteenth, twenty-first, twenty-eighth and nineteenth days, were not days of rest for the people. Investigations prove that in the Assyrian period, in the 8th and 7th centuries B. C., these days, with exception of the 19th, do not show any marked abstention from business transactions. The figures that have been produced to show that in the time of Abraham there is a noticeable abstention on these days, in contrast to the first day of the month, do not prove anything, as long as we do not know whether other days besides the first day of the month were especially auspicious for business transactions. Traces of resting on the Sabbath could have their origin in West Semitic communities founded by people led into captivity. The root from which the word Sabbath is derived is almost unknown in the Assyrian-Babylonian language, while its usage in the Hebrew language is widely extended.

The names of the antediluvian mythological kings handed down by Berosus are West Semitic and quite different from those of the antediluvian patriarchs of Genesis. Thus the view held by many scholars that the names of the Hebrew list, in part at least, are direct translations of the Babylonian names is untenable. And it is unreasonable to assume that the Jewish priests learned in their ancient cult and in their ancestral history should have adopted as their own antecedents—the antediluvian patriarchs—the mythological kings of a country that robbed them not only of their independence but also deported them and held them in bondage. If the Jews who returned to Palestine had been so extensively influenced by the Babylonian religion and history, we should suppose that the Jews who remained in the land would have been influenced even more in this direction. It does not seem to have been the case. The Babylonian Talmud was written in that land by the descendants of those that remained.

The origin of the Babylonian Deluge legend goes back to a West-Semitic narrative which is parent also to the Biblical version. The original seat of the Semitic culture was not Southern Arabia, though the Arabic represents the purest Semitic language. There was no important center of culture in Arabia. The earliest influence upon Babylonia from Arabia was the time of the Hammurabi dynasty. But they like the Cassite Kings did not seem to have influenced the Babylonian culture. The Semites must have migrated to Babylonia at the latest in the fourth or fifth millennium B. C. entering from the North.

As the Semitic Babylonian is more closely related to the Aramaic and Hebraic (or Amoraic) than to the Arabic and Abyssinian, it ought to follow that the Babylonian, Hebraic and Aramaic tongues were at one time the same language. There is no support for the view that the language of Palestine in the time of Abraham was simply a dialect of Arabia; or that the Arameans at that time were still a part of the Arab race.

The inscriptions and archæological finds of contemporaneous peoples have corroborated the early history in the Old Testament of the nations of antiquity. The name of "Abram" has been discovered. Concerning the origin of the worship of Yahweh, the Old Testament furnishes the only light on the subject, contrary to the modern views that the name and worship of Yahweh came from the Arameans; and as Abraham and his ancestors, as well as his descendants were Arameans, it follows that the name and worship of Yahweh were familiar to the Arameans. Among the figurative expressions under which Yahweh is represented in the Old Testament, there are those which point to Aramaic origin. His characteristics are identical with those of the Aramean God Adad. Naturally there is no more proof for saying, as has been suggested, that the worship of Yahweh is derived from that of Adad than that the worship of Adad came from that of Yahweh. It would be safer to say that these characteristic marks which both deities have in common point to their Aramaic origin.

The name of Yahweh is to be found on two old Babylonian tablets in the oath formula. One is said to be from Kish, in the reign of Rim-Anum, who ruled in the latter part of the third millennium B. C. The second is dated in the reign of Sumuabum of

the Hammurabi dynasty. These tablets contain names of Western Semites. Hence it is quite reasonable to expect the name of Yahweh, if the deity was Aramean or West-Semitic.

The West Semitic deity (שמש, ור, אור, מר, אמר) after having been transplanted to Babylonia by the Semites, appeared under different written forms in different localities, as NER-URUGAL in Cutha, AMAR-UTUG in Babylon. These Sumerian forms in time were Semitized and became Nergal and Marduk. With later streams of immigration coming from the West, the name in the original form continued to be brought into the country; but coming in, when the early Sumerian forms of the Semitic names, as well as the religion, had been Babylonized, they were treated as distinct deities. There are a great many proofs that these movements from the West actually took place. The variant forms of the West Semitic solar deity are: Uru, Nergal, Marduk, NIN-IB, Urush, Shamash, Adad, Nusku, Ishum, Sarpanitum, Bunene and Malik. Besides these solar deities, there are other gods as well to be considered as an importation from the West, as Ashur, Ishtar, Anu and Antum, Nabu, Sin, Dagan, Lahmu and Lahamu.

The Babylonian script, besides the argument based on the culture, offers strong evidence in support of this thesis. In the Babylonian script the weaker consonants of radicals are elided or contracted, or appear as vowels. A study of the script of the Northern group of languages makes it most difficult to understand, if the Babylonian is the older language, how the weak radicals, which had disappeared, should have been restored, and the roots correctly introduced in the alphabetic script of the Western languages. For example, it is difficult to understand how Bel, Uru and Tiamat or the corresponding *belu*, *uru* and *tamdu* should be correctly introduced as בעל, אור and תהום. In the Old Testament, the only form of the name of the land known as Amurru, refers to the inhabitants, and appears with the Gentilic ending, i. e. Amori. From the Old Testament it would seem that Amorite history reached far back into antiquity, and that the people had maintained their identity down to the Hebrew period. As a nation, however, they had begun to disintegrate and were losing prestige. The domination of the Hittites in the middle of

the second millennium doubtless brought this about. The chief location of the Amorites was the mountainous region north of what we now recognize as Palestine, covering the district, it seems, as far north as the Orontes. In the Tell-el-Amarna letters the names of the districts are practically all Semitic. As geographical names are frequently retained from one era to another, we realize that the inhabitants of the land prior to this age in all probability were Semites. The predominance of Semitic personal names is evident in these letters. They betray the fact that the native tongue of the writer is Hebraic. Although we know that Aryans or perhaps Turanians also lived there, we may conclude that most of the people in that region not only spoke a Semitic language, but in the early period were Semites and that the land was at a very early time an important center of Semitic culture.

Bearing in mind that the solar worship of the Babylonians goes back to Amurru, we should find many traces of the worship in that land in which it was indigenous. Inasmuch as the Amorites figure so prominently in the early period of Palestine, it is reasonable to expect to find in the Old Testament traces of the worship of that chief deity of this people whose name is written Amurru, Uru, etc., as well as אור in the Aramaic of Babylonia. The name seems to be found in אורי, אוריאל, אוריהו, אוריה, and שרי אור. The deity is also found in the Amarna letters in the name Milkuru. The same name, written Mil-ki-U-ri is found in an Assyrian document dated in the reign of Sargon. This name is perhaps to be seen in Uru(MAR-TU)-Ma-lik, dated in the first dynasty of Babylon. Identical with this name is ארמלך, found in a Phœnician inscription. אריאל, a name applied to Jerusalem, may also contain the element. The name occurs also in the Aramaic Zakir inscription, written אלור = El-Ur. The writing ור for the name of the deity, we find in Punic inscriptions. If ור in West Semitic inscriptions represents Uru, we should expect יר in the Hebrew script, as initial ו usually passes into י. This writing seems to be found in the name ירבעל. Alongside of Ur we find Mar in Aramaic and Phœnician inscriptions. The mountain מריה and the name מריבעל may also contain this element.

It is a general opinion that "Ur of the Chaldees", the home of Abraham, is identical with Urumma or Uru. This opinion rests upon the fact that Uru was called Camarina, according to Eupolemos; *kamar* in Arabic means "Moon", and Uru was in ancient days dedicated to the moon-deity; Terah, the Father of Abraham, journeyed to Harran, another city dedicated to the moon-god. But Uru was the seat of Nannar worship and not of the moon-god, Sin. The identification of Nannar with Sin belongs to a late period. The geographical term Chaldea does not seem to include lower Babylonia. There was, however, a town in the vicinity of Sippar, called Amurru. This region can properly be included in Chaldea. This town, while apparently a city of some prominence in the time of the first dynasty, is not mentioned in the subsequent periods. A large percentage of the residents of Sippar could have been carried into exile by some previous Elamite or Babylonian conqueror, knowing the account of Chedorlaomer's campaign, how he carried away Lot and the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. This city Amurru = Ur is in Chaldea; it thrived at the time that the patriarch lived; its location was later lost sight of; it was inhabited by a West Semitic people and its name is the same as is written in the Old Testament.

The author has doubtless attained his object in showing that the religion and culture of Israel are not of Babylonian origin. Not all of his arguments are entirely convincing. There is no need that they should be so. The Pan-Babylonians who claim the property of Israel must show cause why and justify their claims. If they are not well founded, Israel would get the benefit of the doubt and be left in the possession of his old inheritance. The author has shown at least, it must be admitted, that Israel can turn the tables and claim for itself what has been held to be the property of Babylonia.

It seems, however, to the reviewer that the author overlooked one important point. If there was a culture in Canaan independent of that of the Sumero-Babylonians, there must have been a script. It could not have been the alphabetic writing of the later period. The Semites who emigrated from the West to Babylonia would hardly have taken over the cumbersome syllabic writing of the

Sumerians. It must have been a picture-writing, the archetype of our alphabet. No traces of it are to be found. May we identify with it the Hittite picture-writing? The future will perhaps decide this question.

The writer does not see any reason why the author insists that the two cosmologies were amalgamated in a late period prior to the establishment of Ashurbanipal's library. It could have been done in the time of Abraham, before he left Babylonia, since at that period Marduk was already the head of the Babylonian pantheon, or at least long before the Exodus. Otherwise the author would have to admit that the biblical Creation story is dependent upon the legend of Ashurbanipal's library. It would be improbable to assume that both stories amalgamated both cosmologies independently.

If Apsu was a West Semitic deity, the Sumerian myth would be West Semitic as well.

In the light of the author's arguments, it is indeed doubtful if the institution of the Sabbath could be traced to Babylonia. In itself it would not matter if such proved to be the case. There was never any doubt that it was not a Mosaic institution, but an old Hebrew day of rest. It was observed, according to the Bible, before the Revelation on Mount Sinai took place. The author of the Pentateuch, in connecting this institution with the Creation, implied that it ought to be a day of rest for all human beings. We may presume that Abraham already observed it, as the Talmud maintains, as well as his ancestors who were Babylonians. The common people of Babylonia engaged in business may have gradually neglected its observance altogether. The modern Jews are doing the same. Like the latter, they were not willing or could not afford to lose a day's work every week. It was only observed by the king and priests who had nothing else to do, and whose duty it was to uphold old institutions. And even they, in the course of time, were not inclined to rest one day in every week, especially as the priests became business men, and so restricted it to the days of the intercalary month. Thus the origin of the institution sank into oblivion. The Sabbath could have been originally intended as a day of rest for everybody. The seventh day was said to have

been chosen for this purpose, as the day was unfavorable to business, so the people would not lose much by observing it and would be more inclined to do so. There are still traces in the Talmud that the Sabbath is astrologically an unfavorable day. The ancestors of the Hebrews having been simple shepherds had no reason for neglecting its observance and they might have observed it more or less at the time of the Exodus. Noteworthy in this connection is the Midrashic legend, that Pharaoh granted to the Israelites on the application of Moses the seventh day as a day of rest. Considering it from this point of view, we could explain why there was an abstention from business transactions in the festival days in the time of Hammurabi and not in the 8th and 7th centuries B. C.

If the antediluvian patriarchs and Babylonian mythological kings are based upon a common West Semitic inheritance, we should expect some resemblance in their names. The author could have maintained that the Biblical or West Semitic names of the patriarchs were partially translated into Babylonian.

In the opinion of the writer, however, even if we could prove that the stories of the Creation, antediluvian patriarchs and the Deluge have their origin in Babylonia, it would by no means support the claim that the Babylonian literature was absorbed by Israel as its own. We would raise the question: What have the Babylonian discoveries told us that was not known before? To every reader of the Bible endowed with simple common-sense it must have always been clear that the scene of these stories was laid around Babylonia, whence Abraham came. The Bible by no means disguises the fact. Suppose, that the Torah was actually written by Moses, and consider it as a literary work from a human point of view (there were a good many scholars before the discoveries of the cuneiform inscriptions, who did not believe in divine inspiration): Where did Moses get these stories from? It is improbable to assume that he invented them. The only reasonable explanation must always have been that they were handed down by the ancestors of the Hebrews. Since, however, these ancestors, according to the Bible (Joshua 24), were idolaters, they could not have handed them down in their present monotheistic

form. The only conclusion they could reach, must have been, that Moses altered and stripped these stories of their original polytheism.

Naturally they would have expected to find some day the original stories at the home of these pagan ancestors. Suppose these stories would not have been discovered. Why, the Bible would have lost its historical value and been considered as a book of fiction! To what terrible abuse might the biblical author have been exposed by our Assyriologists, decrying him as an impostor.

As to the Deluge it is noteworthy that the Talmud believes that all the people who perished in the Deluge were heaped up in Babylonia and that in Palestine there was no Deluge at all, that is to say, the incidents of the Deluge as told in Genesis 7,11.12 did not take place in Palestine. It was covered by waters coming from other countries.

The name and worship of Yahweh might have been familiar to the Arameans and perhaps also to the ancestors of Abraham. As a matter of fact, however, Abraham and his descendants did not worship God under this name. The fact that none of the descendants of Abraham before the time of the Exodus bears a name compounded with Yahweh (with the exception perhaps of the mother of Moses **יוכבד**) nor do any of the **נשיאים** enumerated in Num. 1, 5-16; 13, 4-16; 19-28, speaks volumes for the truth of the Biblical assertion that the name of Yahweh was unknown to them (Ex. 6, 3). Hence we understand what Pharaoh meant by saying that he did not know Yahweh (Ex. 5, 2). Moses restored to the highest position the name Yahweh used in days of yore (Gen. 4, 26). **שדי** was, in all probability, a national god of the mountainous region of Syria-Palestine, while Yahweh was explained **אשר אהיה**, the God whose power is everywhere. Naturally in a period when the Mosaic religion was not observed or nearly given up altogether, especially in North-Israel, the name Yahweh, though still retained, was identified with Shaddai, the god of the mountains, and that is the reason why the servants of Ben-Hadad called the God of Israel "a god of the mountains" (I Kings 20, 23). The prophet of Yahweh, however, repudiated indignantly this assertion

(*ibid.* 20, 28). He was most likely worshipped by the Arameans and Babylonians as god, but not as the god *par excellence*.

The author seems to have adopted unwittingly the Talmudic view that Canaan was originally in the possession of the descendants of Shem. The Talmud, however, asserts that in the time of Abraham the country was wrested from the Semites by a non-Semitic population called Canaanites, and that was the reason why God promised to give him back the inheritance of his ancestors. The modern researches concerning the Hittites give to the Talmudic legend a historical foundation.

It seems not improbable to the writer to assume that in the time of Abraham the Canaanites or Hittites were in the actual possession of the greatest part of Palestine and perhaps Phœnicia as well. In the Amarna-period, however, the time of the Exodus, the Semites were again the possessors of these countries. They could have in the meantime subjugated the Hittites and driven them back to their original home. The geographical name Canaan was retained by them as well as the other names of the non-Semitic tribes, just as the Anglo-Saxons were called Britons. From this point of view we would understand what the Bible means by saying **והכנעני אז בארץ** (Gen. 12, 6) "the real Canaanites were in the time of Abraham in the country, but no more in the time of Moses". Sidon could have been from the oldest times a stronghold of the Hittites, and therefore the Bible calls Sidon—the name does not matter—the first-born of Canaan. Several cities of Palestine, as Jerusalem, Shechem, Gerar and others may always have been in the possession of the Semites. It is remarkable that the Talmud does not say **הולך וכובש הארץ** but **הכנעני כבש הארץ**. The Talmud seems to have known more of the ancient history of Palestine, than we are inclined to give it credit for.

In fact it might almost seem a truism that in writing the history of antiquity the Jewish records should be given full credence. Yet this is far from having been the case. It is not the least of the merits of Professor Clay's book that he again points the way to this eminently sound method.